

# Westfield Town Plan



Amended and Adopted: December 9, 2013

This plan was prepared and adopted in accordance with the provisions of 24 V.S.A., Ch. 117, sections 4381-4385. The goals and recommendations outlined in this plan are consistent with the statutory goals recommended in section 4302 of 24 V.S.A.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
*Our Vision and Objectives for the Next Five Years	3
<b>WATER RESOURCES</b>	<b>4</b>
Surface Water	4
Ground Water	5
Wetlands	5
Setbacks and Vegetated Buffer Strips	5
<b>*FACILITIES &amp; SERVICES</b>	<b>7</b>
Water Supply	7
Waste Disposal	7
Post Office	8
Cemeteries	8
Emergency Services	9
Recreation	10
Public Buildings & Land	11
Telecommunication Facilities	13
<b>*EDUCATION</b>	<b>14</b>
Table S-1: Enrollment/Teacher Information	15
Table S-2: School Expenditures	15
<b>ECONOMY</b>	<b>16</b>
Table E-1: Westfield Economic Indicators	17
Table E-2: Westfield Business Mix	18
Table E-3: Westfield Business Establishments by Size and Class	18
<b>*HOUSING</b>	<b>19</b>
Table H-1: Housing and Population Data	20
Affordability	20
Table H-2: Housing Affordability	21
Projected Housing Needs	22
<b>*TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>23</b>
Figure T-1: Highway Classifications	24
<b>*ENERGY</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>*WILDLIFE HABITAT AND SIGNIFICANT NATURAL &amp; HISTORIC FEATURES</b>	<b>27</b>
Wildlife Habitat	27
Natural Heritage Sites	28
Significant Natural & Historic Features	28
<b>*LAND USE</b>	<b>30</b>
Current Land Use	30
Future Land Use	33
<b>*DEVELOPMENT TRENDS AND PLANS FOR ADJACENT TOWNS &amp; THE REGION</b>	<b>35</b>
Montgomery and Lowell	35
Troy, Jay, and Richford	36
Regional Plan	37
<b>*IMPLEMENTATION PLAN</b>	<b>37</b>
General Recommendations & Priorities	37
Zoning Changes	38
<b>MAPS</b> (Base Map, Land Use Map, Zoning District Map, Natural Resource Constraint Map & Water Supply Map)	<b>End of Document</b>

\* Required Plan Elements 24 V.S.A., Chapter 117.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This Town Plan is our attempt to set a course for Westfield's growth and development. Town officials assembled information about the history and current status of the Town, its resources, facilities and services, and current land use. We discussed problems and issues which we feel need to be addressed, and we identified opportunities from which we hope to benefit. Finally, we developed a set of recommendations which we will use to guide our actions over the next 5 years.

We have recognized the importance of Westfield's history by providing a historical context for each section of the plan. We hope that this will help us to remember the relationships between past and present, as we make our decisions for the future. Much of Westfield's history is preserved within the Hitchcock Museum.

Our natural environment adds much to the character of our town. The rocky ledges of Hazen's Notch, vast tracts of forest, and the Missisquoi River, as it meanders through the town, provide the physical setting for life in Westfield. These scenic resources contribute to our quality of life and our economy. Over the next five years, we hope to maintain the historic and scenic resources which have shaped the lifestyles we enjoy here.

The biggest changes Westfield residents have noted over last 10 years or so were the loss of farms and an influx of new residents – young and old. Most people don't want to change a thing about Westfield. They would like the Town to remain rural and peaceful with attractive, well-kept homes and yards and a solid core of prosperous, productive farms. They want Westfield to remain a small town where neighbors are close and people work together for the benefit of their community.

Both Westfield officials and residents recognize the importance of respecting private property rights. In order to maintain the sense of community we have, we will all have to work together to balance public and private interests.

### **Our Vision and Objectives for the Next Five Years**

Many of us wish we could bring back all the farms which have contributed so much to Westfield's agricultural heritage. While that may not be possible, we can try to keep those farms that remain through continual monitoring of our policies and bylaws to ensure that farmers have the opportunity to diversify. We will encourage the productive use of our land and offer opportunities for development that keep with the rural atmosphere we all enjoy.

We want to maintain local recreation access to farm and forestland for snowmobiling, hunting, fishing, skiing, biking and hiking.

We are dedicated to supporting our existing businesses and industries. We will keep them by minimizing local government interference.

Over the next 5 years, we will continue working with the town of Jay to ensure the smooth operation of our local school, and we will do our best to keep the educational needs of our children as a top priority.

We will continue to monitor the expansion of the Jay Peak Resort and other new developments occurring around the mountain. These have the potential to impact the Town, creating opportunities as well as problems.

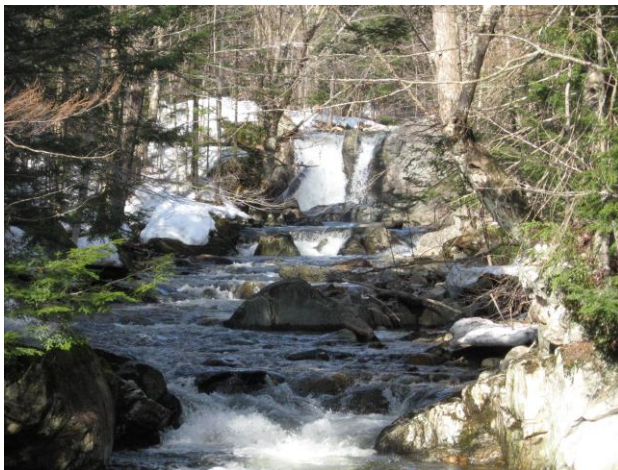
Residential growth in Westfield should proceed at a pace which allows us to retain our rural character and provide municipal services. We will maintain community spirit by welcoming newcomers, and by keeping up the neat, clean appearance of the Town.

Finally, we want to continue the spirit of cooperation we have developed with the Town of Jay and extend it to other neighboring Towns so that development in the local region can proceed in a manner which benefits us all.

## **WATER RESOURCES**

### **Surface Water**

Westfield lies in the Missisquoi River drainage. Its streams once offered many excellent mill sites to early settlers. The Missisquoi may soon be designated as a National Scenic River. Mill Brook was named by Lyman Taft, who erected the first grist and saw mill in town upon its banks.



According to a Vermont Rivers Study (1986), Coburn Brook and its tributaries in the northeast corner of town, including Phillips Pond are Class A waters - "of uniformly excellent character" and suitable for public water supply. All other waters in the town are Class B - "suitable for bathing and recreation, irrigation and agricultural uses; good fish habitat; good aesthetic value; acceptable for public water supply with filtration and

disinfection." Threats to water quality in town include agricultural runoff and sediments washing into streams as a result of logging activities.

### **Ground Water**

Ground water is the source of all the drinking water supplies in Westfield. Any activities which introduce contaminants directly into the ground - underground storage tanks, leach fields, agricultural activities – can affect ground water quality. In addition to the many individual wells and springs, there are six water systems serving more than one household. All of these systems lie completely or partially within Westfield: Jay Peak Basin, Westfield Village, Alpine Haven, Waterland, and Troy. Protection areas for each of these systems have been identified and mapped.

### **Wetlands**

Westfield has approximately 444 acres of wetlands. They are many in number and they are distributed throughout the town, with a number of wetland areas along the Missisquoi River. Two large forested wetlands, associated with Snider and Taft Brooks, are located just west of TH 17. Wetlands serve important water quality functions such as filtering and flood protection, and they are subject to both state and federal regulation.

### **Setbacks and Vegetated Buffer Strips**

Minimum setback distances from the top of the bank for septic systems, buildings, or other structures, as well as a vegetated buffer strip between any land use activity and a water body will serve to prevent or minimize water pollution. A minimum setback distance for any structure will keep construction or repair activity away from the shoreline; will help maintain the vegetated buffer strip; and will provide a permeable area for rain and runoff. Setbacks and buffer strips also help protect the natural character of the waterways providing recreational and aesthetic value.

Riparian buffer strips are areas of natural, undisturbed vegetation along the shoreline of lakes, ponds, and streams. They provide a number of valuable functions including bank and stream bed stabilization, reduction of nutrients, pollution and sediments entering the waters, regulation of water temperature and stream flow velocity, cover for fish in the water and for wildlife on the shoreline, and feeding and nesting habitat for birds. Riparian buffers are complex ecosystems that help provide optimum food and habitat for stream communities and are useful in mitigating or controlling non-point source pollution.

Buffer strips shall be maintained on all waterways, including small streams. Planting of vegetation and trees along the shoreline of the Missisquoi River is already being done by the National Scenic River Organization. Westfield's current Zoning Bylaw provides that at a minimum, a 50 ft. setback with a vegetated buffer strip shall be maintained along all waterways. Small streams are most vulnerable because they respond most dramatically to changes in

adjacent land uses, tend to be located on the steepest sloping and erosion-prone lands, and often have the highest quality remaining habitat. Even tiny brooks not big enough to hold trout can benefit, because shade keeps the water cool and rich in oxygen for trout habitat downstream. It is essential to maintain the quality of these headwater streams to ensure the protection of water quality downstream.

#### Problems/Opportunities:

- 1) Need to maintain vegetated buffer strips along shorelines of streams and the Missisquoi River in order to prevent bank erosion and collapse.
- 2) Landowners along the river have had problems during high water with erosion and collapse of the banks.
- 3) State regulations now address the siting, design, and installation of all on-site septic systems and potable water supplies. (Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation's *Environmental Protection Rules, Chapter 1, Wastewater System and Potable Water Supply Rules, Effective September 29, 2007*)
- 4) Agriculture and forestry practices affect water quality.
- 5) Need to avoid excessive development in flood-prone areas.
- 6) The Missisquoi's expected National Scenic River designation may attract attention to this resource.

#### Recommendations:

- 1) Assess existing land uses in flood plain, near wetlands, in well-head protection areas and identify potential sources of contamination.
- 2) The Orleans County Conservation District is available to offer technical assistance to private landowners with flooding and erosion control problems.
- 3) Ensure the zoning ordinance maintains provisions for consideration of ground and surface water contamination and wetland disturbance.
- 4) Agriculture and forestry operations should follow the recommended Acceptable Management Practices (AMPs).
  - a) Information on *Acceptable Agricultural Practice Regulations* can be found at: <http://www.vermontagriculture.com/ARMES/awq/AAPs.htm> or by contacting the VT Dept. of Agriculture.
  - b) Information on *Acceptable Management Practices for Maintaining Water Quality on Logging Jobs in Vermont* can be found at: <http://www.vtfpr.org/watershed/documents/Amp2006.pdf> or by contacting the Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks, and Recreation.
- 5) Ensure that flood hazard area regulations are properly enforced to maintain the Town's eligibility for the National Flood Insurance Program.
- 6) The National Scenic River designation can be utilized for water quality education and protection measures.

## FACILITIES & SERVICES



### **Water Supply**

Forty eight homes in the village are provided with a community water supply from both a spring and a well on North Hill. This system was renovated in 1999 and is owned and maintained by the Westfield Fire District. It has expansion capability of another three homes. Alpine Haven also has a well-fed water supply that serves approximately fifty homes. Water quality from private wells and springs is drinkable, but reports of high sulfur and iron content are common.

Since 1985, the delineation of **Public Water Source Protection Areas (SPA)** has been required for all proposed new sources for Public Community Water Systems. Since 1992, a Public Community and Non-Transient, Non-Community Water System must have an approved **Source Protection Plan (SPP)** in order to receive an Operating Permit. Assistance with all aspects of Vermont's Public Water Source Protection Program is available by calling the DEC Water Supply Division at **1-800-823-6500 or (802) 241-3400**. The division is also a good resource for guidance on controlling development in Wellhead Protection Areas (WHPA).

#### Problems\Opportunities:

- 1) The Department of Environmental Conservation's Wastewater System and Potable Water Supply Rules, Effective September 29, 2007 now control the siting and installation of all potable water supplies and on-site septic systems.
- 2) Guidance on Source Protection Plan and Wellhead Protection Areas is available through the VT Department of Environmental Conservation – Water Quality Division.

#### Recommendations:

- 1) The Planning Commission should contact VT DEC Water Quality Division to discuss SPA and WHPA and their protection.
- 2) Identified Source Protection Areas and Wellhead Protection Areas should be located on the zoning map. Development within the identified areas should be subjected to a higher level of review (i.e. Conditional Use Review) prior to permitting.

### **Waste Disposal**

Currently, solid waste collected locally for disposal goes to the Waste USA, Inc. facility located on the Airport Road in Coventry. Westfield has a solid waste transfer station and recycling center. This facility is located at the town garage. A dumpster is available for residents to get rid of waste on a fee per bag basis. The town covers recycling costs. Recycling is also provided at the Waste USA,

Inc. facility. Some residents opt to have trash pickup done by privately contracted haulers. Twice a year, a hazardous waste disposal day is held. The Town covers the expense for all the town residents that participate.

Westfield residents want to maintain the Town's neat appearance. Local officials are concerned that this appearance is increasingly marred by an accumulation of junk cars in some neighborhoods.

Westfield is a member of the Northeast Kingdom Waste Management District (NEKWMD). The regional solid waste management organization is responsible for maintaining the solid waste plan for its member towns.

#### Problems\Opportunities:

- 1) Opportunity for cooperation with adjoining Towns on recycling program.
- 2) Opportunity to work with NEKWMD on solid waste management issues and planning.
- 3) There is provision for junk car removal, junky yards, and junkyards in the Zoning Bylaws which may need to be clarified to make enforcement easier.

#### Recommendations:

- 1) The VT Legislature recently passed mandatory recycling legislation that will take effect on July 1, 2015. The Town should begin planning how they will address the requirements of the legislation, possibly working together with adjoining towns.
- 2) Examine existing junk car ordinance in the Bylaws and determine if it meets the current need and if it is enforceable.
- 3) Continue membership in the Northeast Kingdom Waste Management District for solid waste planning/recycling program.

### **Post Office**

Years ago, the early inhabitants of Westfield traveled to Craftsbury for their mail. In about 1830, a mail route was established between Craftsbury and St. Albans. Soon after, a branch route was created between Lowell and North Troy. Ezra Johnson carried the mail twice a week on horseback and finally, a post office was established in Westfield. The current post office is located in a private residence and hours are limited.

### **Cemeteries**

The North Hill Cemetery is managed by the Westfield Selectmen with an appropriation from the Town. As of July 1, 2013, the price of a single lot is \$150. At the time of purchasing a lot, corner stones must also be purchased. The price of the corner stones is \$130.



Total acreage (180' x 124'): 0.5  
Number of Lots - Total: 66  
Number of Lots remaining to be sold: 30  
Number of Lots sold in the last 5 years: 6

The Westfield Cemetery is managed by the Westfield Cemetery Association. It is maintained with trust funds. There are only a few lots left, and anyone is welcome to purchase one. Fee structures are the same as in the North Hill Cemetery.

Total acreage:  
Number of Lots - Total: 234  
Number of Lots - Occupied: 203  
Number of Lots remaining to be sold: 29 (approx.)  
Number of Lots sold in the last 5 years: 21

#### Problems/Opportunities:

- 1) Few lots are left in Westfield Cemetery, and as North Hill develops, land prices here are likely to rise. Currently, there is a chance to expand North Hill Cemetery onto adjacent land.
- 2) Price for cemetery lots is not adequate to provide for perpetual care of the grounds.

#### Recommendations:

- 1) Consider purchasing additional land for cemetery expansion before land prices rise.
- 2) Restructure the cemetery lot prices to provide for the care of the cemeteries.



### **Emergency Services**

Fire Protection: Westfield is protected by the Troy Volunteer Fire Department except for the area of Alpine Haven, which is served by Montgomery's Volunteer Fire Department. The Orleans County Sheriff's Department in Newport dispatches these services. The Town pays for fire and rescue services through an annual appropriation.

Emergency Medical Services: The Towns of Westfield, Jay, Troy and Lowell contribute annual appropriations to support the Missisquoi Valley Ambulance Service based in Troy, and the ambulance bills each insurance company privately. The Ambulance Service is searching for a more central location to make the response time adequate for all the towns it serves. Response times in

Westfield are good, since many of the volunteers live in Westfield. Patients are taken to North Country Hospital, twelve miles away in the City of Newport.

Police Protection: The Orleans County Sheriff's Department and the Vermont State Police in Derby provide law enforcement services for the Town. The Town contracts yearly with the Orleans County Sheriff's Department to patrol the roads, check businesses at night, and provide 24-hour emergency dispatching services.

Westfield is a member of the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) District 10. The Selectboard has adopted the LEPC 10 *Hazardous Materials Emergency Plan*. This plan is for coordinated response to spills of hazardous materials establishes a network throughout Essex, Orleans, and Caledonia Counties. Philip Gonyaw is the Town's Community Emergency Coordinator. Town residents are notified of tornados, floods, and severe storms by radio or television.

The town has a Basic Emergency Operations Plan on file with VEM & NVDA that is updated annually. The town also has an All-Hazards Mitigation Plan on file with VEM and NVDA, but this is expired. Having an updated AHMP in effect will reduce the local match requirement in the event of a declared disaster where FEMA is involved.

The Town is currently working on a disaster relief program that would provide emergency shelter. The town office is designated as the command center. A generator has been installed. The community center will provide shelter. There have been 25 cots, bedding, water and food.

#### Recommendations:

- 1) The Town should keep current all emergency plan information.
- 2) The Town should monitor the provision of emergency services in the community. Services should be comprehensive and affordable, and responders should be adequately trained.

#### **Recreation**

For a very small town, the Westfield area offers a nice variety of recreational opportunities for all ages. For young children, there is the playground at the Community Center, which the Town has upgraded. The Town has also built tennis and basketball courts available to the community. The school participates in a ski program offered at Jay Peak, and there is hockey for all ages in Newport and Jay.

There is opportunity for both road and mountain biking in our local community. The expansion of Jay Peak has created a water park, ice arena and golf course.

For older residents, there is a Senior Center in the Westfield Community Center. Senior meals are provided at the Westfield Community Center. The Community Center facility also hosts events such as dancing, scouts, celebrations, private parties and music events.

The Hitchcock Library and Museum provides a quiet place for people to go on rainy days. More information on this facility can be found in the Public Lands & Buildings section of the plan.

Commercial establishments in the area offer camping, swim lessons, bowling, downhill skiing, and a fitness center. The area around Westfield offers outdoor recreation for all ages including canoeing on the Missisquoi River, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing on miles of V.A.S.T. Trails and Class 4 Roads, hiking on the Long Trail, biking, hunting, fishing, and trapping. Private landowners provide users access for many of these activities.

#### Problems/Opportunities:

- 1) Some landowners are beginning to post their land, and this may limit certain recreation opportunities - snowmobiling, cross country skiing, hiking, hunting, fishing, and trapping.

#### Recommendations:

- 1) Encourage the landowners to continue allowing recreation on their land.
- 2) Encourage townspeople to use the facilities we have (i.e. the community center and outdoor recreation facilities).
- 3) Encourage good communication between landowners and recreational users, and recognize the contribution private landowners make for meeting local recreational needs.

### **Public Buildings & Lands**

The Hitchcock Museum & Library, Westfield's central landmark, was built in 1899 with funds donated by Aaron E. Hitchcock, a local farmer, businessman, and real estate investor. Hitchcock's \$10,000 donation to the Town constructed the building, established a natural history collection, and provided a fund for maintenance. Since then, the museum collection has grown to include wild game trophies from around the world. There is a large collection of ships in bottles donated by Ralph Preston, a onetime Lowell resident. The museum also houses a complete history of the Town in photos, documents, and objects such as the first plow to till Westfield's soil. The Selectboard is charged with overseeing the Museum & Library facilities.



In 1999, a celebration was held in honor of the Museum's centennial birthday. Various Towns supplied floats, antiques, and clowns for the parade. Bread & Puppet Theater also participated with quite a selection of puppet characters. Craft vendors and other set-ups helped with the celebration. The Air Force National Guard of Burlington opened the celebration by leading the parade.

The Museum/Library is in the process of making the building ADA accessible. We are putting a ramp, increasing the parking lot and marking for handicapped parking. A handicap access bathroom is being installed. Part of the improvements include the replacement of an outside door, with two inside doorways being widened.

This improvement is being funded by taxpayer money and funds from Vermont Community Development Program.

The former Village School has become the Westfield Community Center. With grants from the State and the Historical Society, it was renovated to resemble the way it was originally. This building is used for senior meals on Mondays and Thursdays. It is also used for civic groups, selectmen, Town and other board meetings, as well as being rented out for private functions. Work has been completed on the playground and parking lot. Westfield Select Board is charged with overseeing the Community Center facilities.

Public facilities and lands in Westfield currently include:

Town Owned:

- Town Offices
- Hitchcock Museum & Library
- Town Garage
- Community Center
- Playground, tennis court and basketball court
- One-half acre on VT RTE 242 (gifted to the town)
- One-half of the Jay/Westfield School (located in Jay)
- The Village Common (intersection of Route 100 and North Hill Road)
- Westfield and North Hill Cemeteries

State owned:

State Highway Garage  
Jay Peak & Jay State Forest  
Hazen's Notch Natural Heritage Area  
Long Trail & Long Trail State Forest

Problems/Opportunities:

- 1) The Green Mountain Club occasionally purchases available property to add to the Long Trail, and donates the rest of the land to the State.
- 2) The Hitchcock Museum & Library, Community Center, Town Offices, and Town Garage all require upkeep and maintenance.

Recommendations:

- 1) Consider areas of town, places important to local residents, where the Town may want to secure public access through donation, acquisition, or easements.
- 2) Continue improving and renovating the Community Center, including the out door recreation center.
- 3) Purchase land to expand the cemetery.
- 4) Town officials should review and comment on any proposed purchases that would increase the amount of public lands in Westfield.



**Telecommunication Facilities**

Towers and related infrastructure require careful consideration. These structures tend to be located on highly visible locations on mountaintops, ridgelines and in residential areas. As people increasingly feel the need to be ‘connected’, it is expected that the need for additional facilities will increase in the coming years.

The Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 placed certain limitations over municipal control of these structures; however, within those confines, there is a desire to protect the Town’s historic character, rural nature, and aesthetic beauty. Toward that end, the Westfield Zoning Bylaw incorporates provisions for regulating personal wireless telecommunication facilities in the town. Personal Wireless Telecommunication Facilities may be approved conditionally in any zoning district within the town. Subjecting these facilities to Conditional Use Review allows local officials to consider such things as aesthetics, integrity of residential zones, ridge line protection, preferred locations, and collocation or clustering of tower facilities. Projects may be approved with conditions that can mitigate any potential negative impacts. It is important to note, however, that

developers do have an option to bypass the local permitting process and use the Public Service Board's Section 248 process.

Residents and visitors of Westfield should have access to a range of telecommunications and broadband opportunities, and the Town supports investment in telecommunications and broadband infrastructure within the Town. The following list includes recommendations for locating Telecommunication facilities in the town:

Recommendations:

1. All such facilities shall be located in appropriate areas, respecting the integrity of residential areas, aesthetic concerns, and natural resource issues. Through the Zoning Bylaws, the Town may specify reasonable areas where these facilities may be located.
2. Towers and related infrastructure shall only be as tall as absolutely necessary.
3. Unless required by the FAA, towers shall not be illuminated. Where required, lights shall be shielded in order to minimize aesthetic impacts.
4. Structures shall be designed in order to minimize aesthetic impacts. Towers and related infrastructure shall be screened from view to the greatest extent possible.
5. Structures should be co-located whenever possible.
6. Electric or transmission lines shall be installed so as to minimize aesthetic and ecological impacts.
7. The Town reserves the right to hire independent consultants to evaluate applications for telecommunication facilities. The applicant shall pay for the reasonable costs of these services.
8. All equipment shall be removed when no longer used or needed. A bond may be required to ensure that funds are available to accomplish these purposes.
9. The Town should participate in telecommunications projects that go through the Public Service Board's Section 248 process.

## EDUCATION



In the late 1800s, when Westfield's population was almost at its peak, the Town had six common schools serving 138 pupils. The Town paid out a total of \$439.75 in salaries to ten teachers! The last remaining school in Westfield, built in 1860, was closed in June 1992.

In March of 1992, the Town voted to cooperate with the Town of Jay to build a new elementary school (grades K-6) in Jay. Students in grades 7-8 have school choice (Derby, Troy, or Montgomery), while students in grades 9-12 can attend North Country Union High School in Newport. The 2012-2013 school enrollment

figures for Jay/Westfield Joint Elementary was 97 pupils. Recent enrollment and other school information can be found in the following table:

Table S-1: Jay/Westfield Joint Elementary School information:

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
<b>Enrollment</b>	86	91	89	84	97
<b>Classroom Teachers</b>	--	6	6	6.1	--
<b>Other Teachers</b>	--	1.2	1	1	--
<b>Student/Teacher ratio</b>	10.31	11.19	9.73	9.55	9.9
<b>Eligible Special Education % (identified)</b>	20.9%	8.13%	11.44%	8.80%	9.80%
<b>Home Study</b>	4	5	5	4	3

VT DOE School Report (<http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/maindata.html>)

Westfield is part of the Orleans – Essex North Supervisory Union (OENSU) region. OENSU indicated that for the 2013-2014 school year there were 9 Westfield students at the North Country Union Junior High School and 20 Westfield students at the North Country Union High School.

School financing and education taxes have become a very important and sensitive issue since the implementation of a statewide education tax (Act 60) in 1999. The table below provides recent breakdown of expense information for the Jay / Westfield Joint School for the period 2007 – 2009. It is important to note that these figures are identical for Jay and Westfield as it is a shared school.

Table S-2: Jay / Westfield Joint School Expenditures:

<b>Expenditure % of Total School Expenses:</b>	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	VERMONT 2009-10
Direct Instruction	58.00%	58.00%	62.00%	60.00%
Student Services	11.00%	11.00%	10.00%	11.00%
Staff Services	15.00%	14.00%	15.00%	16.00%
Leadership Svcs.	12.00%	12.00%	9.00%	10.00%
Operation	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	3.00%
Expenditures per pupil	\$12,288.00	\$11,298.00	\$12,447.00	\$15,601.00
Tuition & Fees to other VT Districts	\$72,836.00	\$52,462.00	\$54,718.00	---

VT DOE School Report (<http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/maindata.html>)

The Jay / Westfield school spends less on average than other Vermont schools for student and staff services, and more than the average for leadership services and operation and maintenance. Importantly, the expenditures per pupil have been below the state's excess spending threshold. This keeps taxpayers from paying the additional penalty that comes with excessive school spending.

NETCAP SCORES: Proficiency and Above

		2008-09	2009-10	2010-2011	2011-2012
<b>Reading</b>	Jay-Westfield	71.00%	75.00%	69.00%	82.00%
	State	72.00%	73.00%	71.00%	73.00%
<b>Math</b>	Jay-Westfield	65.00%	72.00%	76.00%	82.00%
	State	66.00%	65.00%	66.00%	65.00%

The New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) measures student performance in the areas of reading, math, and writing. The Vermont Dept. of Education website: <http://education.vermont.gov/> has information on other schools for comparison.

The Town appropriates funding for Adult Basic Education which is provided in Newport. Local day care services are provided in Jay and Troy.

Problems/Opportunities:

1) The Jay-Westfield Elementary School requires long-term and sometimes expensive maintenance. Local officials should remain aware of future needs and plan accordingly.

Recommendations:

1) Due to developments in Jay and neighboring communities and the expected growth, the school facility, student capacity, and student performance should be monitored.

## ECONOMY



Westfield's first center of business and industry was the West Hill or Buck Hill. The first gristmill was built here in 1802. The gristmills were followed by other businesses including a boarding house, blacksmith shop, and a starch factory. The valley later witnessed the development of sawmills, a wheelwright, and a shoe shop. In 1818, Westfield residents were glad when a small store was opened eliminating the need to travel to Craftsbury to do their trading. A cheese factory operated below the LeBlanc farm house. The Bowen Hunter Bobbin Mill began its operation on Mill Brook, north of the village in the early 1900s. At one time, the Mill was a blacksmith shop. The Mill produced its last commercial wooden products in 1964.



In the 1950s, residents of the surrounding communities decided to develop Jay Peak as a ski area. They formed a company, sold shares, marked trails, and put up a chair lift. Today, Jay Peak has dozens of trails, glades, and chutes served by eight lifts. The Jay Peak Tram House is located in Westfield. With ongoing and planned expansions of the Jay-Troy wastewater treatment facility, the resort's new owner, Jay Peak Resorts, has entered a new phase of expansion: Following the completion of an 18-hole golf course, new hotels with shops, restaurants, and other amenities have been constructed; a four-season indoor recreation center with an ice rink and water park is completed; and residential developments continue around the mountain. All of these facilities, existing and planned, are in the Town of Jay. The scale of development around Jay Peak, however, will certainly impact development in Westfield and local officials should be mindful of this.

The table of economic indicators below provides a snapshot of the town's labor force and income levels. Although the income figures are dated, it is likely that Westfield's median income still exceeds the county median, yet remains lower than the Vermont median income.

Table E-1: Westfield Economic Indicators

	<b>Westfield</b>	<b>Orleans County</b>	<b>Vermont</b>
Median Household Income, 2007-2011 (CENSUS)	\$52,400	\$40,900	\$53,400
Per Capita Income, 2007-2011 (CENSUS)	\$22,600	\$21,000	\$28,400
Annual Average Wage, 2010 (VT DEPT. OF LABOR)	\$24,100	\$31,700	\$39,400
Civilian Labor Force, 2011	330	15,150	359,200
...employed	300	13,950	339,100
...unemployed	30	1,250	20,100

VT Indicators Online, <http://www.vtlni.info/> and <http://www.housingdata.org/>

The Town of Westfield currently has a fairly diverse mix of small-scale business and industry. These businesses provide many of the goods and services needed by the local community; however, there is no car wash or laundromat available.

Economic activities are tied to agriculture, forest products, manufacturing, recreation, tourism, and services for the Town and region. While the Town would like to see these businesses grow, the Town is more interested in the maintenance of the vitality of these businesses. The Town would like to see new, non-polluting, value-added businesses come to Town that fit in well with the character of the Town and utilize the products of the Town's farms.

The eight operating farms average 250 acres each (There are 16 parcels of land categorized as farms in the 2013 Grand List). Westfield has over 5,000 acres of actively managed forestland (There are 55 parcels of land categorized as woodland in the 2013 Grand List). Six of the eight farmers sell pulp, logs, or firewood to supplement their incomes. There are currently six commercial maple-sugaring operations. Other existing businesses are listed below.

Table E-2: Westfield Business Mix, 2013

<b>Manufacturing</b>	<b>Commerce</b>
t-shirt factory	general store
canoe factory	hardware store
	auction house
	antique store
	computer services
<b>Services/Recreation/Tourism</b>	<b>Agriculture/Forestry</b>
2 campgrounds	8 active farms
level-two community care center	cheese producer
restaurant	yogurt factory
bed and breakfast	agricultural products dealer
2 construction contractors	horse farm
Jay Peak Ski Area	3 sheep farms
3 auto shops/car sales	apiary
	2 market gardens
	plant nursery
	6 commercial maple producers
	pulp, firewood, saw logs

Westfield Planning Commission, 2013

2011 County Business Pattern data (<http://www.census.gov/econ/cbp/index.html>) indicated that there were 11 business establishments in Westfield (The 2013 Grand List indicates that there are 14 commercial properties in the Town.). Nine of these 11 businesses employed 1-4 people, and two businesses employed between 10-19 people. The table below provides a breakdown of local employment:

Table E-3: Westfield Establishments by # and Employment-size Class, 2011

	1-4 employees	05/09/13	10-19	Total Establishments
Solar barn	2	--	--	2
Manufacturing	1	--	1	2
Retail Trade	2	--	--	2
Professional & Technical Svcs.	1	--	--	1
Admin, Waste Mgmt, Support	1	--	--	1
Health Care & Social Assistance	1	--	--	1
Other Services	3	--	--	3

U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

### Problems\Opportunities:

- 1) Expansion at the Jay Peak Resort may lead to a greater increase in residential development in Westfield. Many of these homes could potentially be for seasonal/vacation use. There may be increased opportunity for tourist-related businesses and services.
- 2) An increasing number of retirees and young families are choosing Westfield as a place to live. There are also more working people who move here and either commute or find ways to work out of their homes.
- 3) The Hitchcock Library and Museum is an unusual facility for such a small town, and has potential to attract visitors to Westfield.
- 4) Home occupations are a permitted use in all of Westfield's zoning districts.

### Recommendations:

- 1) Maintain good relations with Town of Jay.
- 2) Ensure zoning is flexible enough to allow agricultural diversification.
- 3) Investigate ways to maintain productive land while allowing additional residential development.
- 4) Communicate with local forestland owners about public recreation access and concerns regarding erosion control and visual impacts of clear-cuts.
- 5) Encourage forestry and agricultural practices to operate under Acceptable Management Practices (AMPs).
- 6) Encourage new businesses that fit well with the character of the Town.
- 7) Encourage the study of new value-added businesses that utilize the products of the local dairy farms.

## HOUSING



The first settler in Westfield was Jesse Olds who arrived from Massachusetts in 1798. Olds was a lawyer and Congregational Clergyman, who "by reason of irregularities, left civilization and sought the wilds of Vermont." He settled on the West Hill.

The first family to settle in the flat where the village now stands, Captain Medad Hitchcock and his sons, Thomas, Heber, and Smith arrived in 1804. By 1810, Westfield's population was 149, and by 1890 it had reached its peak at 763. From there, it descended to an all-time low of 354 persons in 1940, and has risen slowly to its current level at 536.

In 1990 the Town of Westfield had a population of 422 persons. By 2000, this number increased to 503, and in 2010 to 536. The 2000 Census figure for Westfield represented the first time that Westfield’s population has exceeded 500 persons since the 1910 Census.

Table H-1: Westfield Housing Data

	Westfield	Orleans County
Total Population, 2010	536	27231
Total Housing Units, 2010	373	16162
...owning home	197	8553
...renting home	30	2767
...vacant housing units	146	4842
.....for seasonal use	127	3951
.....for rent	8	272
.....for sale	3	184
Median housing unit age, 2010	1969	1969

VT Housing Data, <http://www.factfinder.census.gov>

A closer look at the 2010 Census population revealed that 131 (24.4%) persons were aged 62 and older; 105 (14.6%) persons were aged 17 and under; and, 300 (56.0%) persons were between the ages of 18 and 61.

As of the 2010 Census, there were 373 dwelling units in Westfield. The table above shows that of these 373 units, 127 were occupied and the remaining 146 were vacant. Most of these vacant units, 127, are used seasonally. Occupied housing units in Westfield seem to have ample room for the occupants. According to the 2010 Census, the average household size was 2.29 persons. The median age for all housing units in Westfield - the year structures were built - was 1969.

2013 Grand List data for the Town reveals that there were 102 *Residential -1* properties (less than 6-acres) and 98 *Residential – 2* properties (6-acres or larger) in Westfield. There were also 13 Mobile Homes in the Town – two unlanded (without land) and one commercial apartment facility. *Seasonal* properties in the Town totaled 103 (56 homes on less than 6-acres, and 47 homes on 6-acres or more. Of the 317 dwellings in the Grand List (farms not included), the percentage of Season dwellings is approximately 32%.

**Affordability**

The definition of affordable in terms of housing is that the total monthly ownership costs do not exceed 30% of the occupant's gross income. The Planning Commission believes that there may be a need for a limited number of new, affordable rental units (where ownership costs are the highest) for some persons in the community. As a whole, though, housing affordability does not seem to be a serious issue in Westfield. The town has a limited amount of goods and services available, few local employment opportunities, and lacks the infrastructure that would be needed for significant amounts of multi-family

housing, and senior housing or assisted living facilities. The Alpine Haven development on Route 242 in the northwestern corner of town provides some affordable housing units. Data from the 2010 and 2000 Census of Population and Housing confirms the supposition made above.

The following table provides information on Housing Affordability for Westfield and Orleans County, including housing values, ownership costs, and affordability. Like most, if not all, of Orleans County, the median value of vacation homes sold has been greater than the value of primary residences sold. This is not surprising as more affluent people from outside of the region continue to be attracted to this rural area. Also noteworthy, is that of 36 specified housing units between 2007 & 2011, 30 (or 83%) paid more than 30% of their gross incomes to cover total housing costs. If this sample is representative of the total housing units (373) in Westfield, as many as 310 housing units could be considered unaffordable.

Table H-2: Westfield Housing Affordability, 2012

<b>Homeownership Costs</b>	<b>Westfield</b>	<b>Orleans County</b>
Primary residences sold, 2012	5	233
...median price of homes sold	\$199,900	\$129,000
Vacation residences sold, 2012	3	84
...median price of vacation homes sold, 2012	\$145,000	\$186,973
<b>Ownership Costs / Affordability</b>		
Median monthly ownership costs, 2005-2009		
...with mortgage	\$1,208	\$1,102
...without mortgage	\$515	\$466
...% of household income, 1999	30.2%	22.2%
Median gross rent, 2000	\$1,114	\$626
...% of household income, 1999	50.0%	32.8%
<b>Rental housing</b>		
Specified housing units with gross rent, 2007-2011	36	2207
...at or above 30% of household income	30	1265

VT Housing Data, [www.housingdata.org](http://www.housingdata.org)

Town officials believe that the more important housing needs in Westfield are to ensure that the Town's residents are living in housing that is safe, energy efficient, and provided with water supply and sewage treatment systems that function properly. To this end the Town created a fire district to upgrade a water supply system that serves the Village. This system was at one time privately owned and has been donated to the Fire District. With regard to sewage treatment, Westfield does not have a public sewer system nor does it regulate private, on-site systems. Therefore it is critical that residents comply with the applicable State regulations.

To address energy efficiency, the town encourages the utilization of existing resources such as the Northeast Employment and Training Organization (NETO). NETO provides qualified applicants no-cost home weatherization assistance, and their Home Energy Assistance Technology division provides energy audit services. Efficiency Vermont also provides energy efficiency assistance to communities.

### **Projected Housing Needs**

The population of Orleans County experienced a moderate growth in population between 1990 and 2000, and the populations of Westfield, Lowell (+24%), Jay (+12%), and Montgomery (21%) in Franklin County, all experienced more rapid growth than other communities in the area. Although housing growth has slowed since 2008, continued rapid growth in this area could put pressure on existing housing stock, creating a need for additional and more affordable housing in the future.

When the age distribution of the population was examined, it appeared that most of the increase is in the older population. This could be that more people are choosing to retire in this area, as well as the aging in the existing population. For the past twenty years, all age groups under 30 have been declining in number, while those over 30 have been on the increase. This trend will affect the type of services and housing needed by Westfield residents in the coming years. Demands for health services and accessibility will probably increase. It will be important to ensure that all public buildings are handicapped accessible. Access for emergency vehicles will also become more important as this aging population moves further into remote areas of the Town.

Town officials feel there is limited room for residential development within the village because of a lack of infrastructure. Most of the land along Route 100 is in the flood plain, thereby limiting its development potential. Future development is expected to occur on the higher lands in town. Alpine Haven and North Hill are the most likely places for residential growth. These areas are both served by good roads. In addition, development in Alpine Haven and North Hill areas will not substantially affect farming or forestry activities.

The State of Vermont encourages communities to provide housing that meets the needs of a diversity of groups in each Vermont community, particularly low and moderate income residents. The town of Westfield attempts to do this by permitting one- and two-family dwellings in all zoning districts. Multi-family dwellings are permitted conditionally in the Village and Recreation-Residential districts, and mobile home parks are permitted conditionally in the Rural-Agricultural district. By statute (24 V.S.A., Ch. 117), accessory dwellings must be allowed in all districts where conventional housing is allowed, and the Zoning Bylaw was amended to address this requirement.

### Problems\Opportunities:

- 1) Expansion at Jay Peak Resort may cause an increase in residential development in Westfield, especially in the Alpine Haven area.
- 2) An increasing number of retirees are choosing Westfield as a place to live. There are also more working people who move here and either commute or work out of their homes. These people will have different needs for town services than those who have lived here in the past. Their preferences will also tend to alter the traditional settlement pattern. For example, new rural residents may choose to live away from other people rather than clustering close together.
- 3) Land and housing prices may rise above the affordability level for local residents.

### Recommendations:

- 1) Ensure zoning regulations offer a variety of options for future home sites, especially in the areas of town which are most able to support new growth.
- 2) Monitor residential growth in order to ensure that municipal services are adequate.
- 3) Provide homeowners information regarding energy efficient home improvements.
- 4) Ensure that landowners are aware that VT regulates on-site water and wastewater systems and state permits are needed if changes are needed for these systems.

## **TRANSPORTATION**



The main road from Westfield to Lowell was laid out in 1806. This was a welcome development to residents who previously had road access only to Craftsbury, a long uncomfortable ride over West Hill. Today, Westfield has over 31 miles of traveled highways. The route from Westfield to Lowell is part of State Highway Route 100 which crosses 5.9 miles of town. Another 3.7 miles of the State Highway Route 242, traverses the northwest corner of the town along Jay Brook into the Jay State Forest.

Westfield has about 23 miles of town roads: 6.57 miles of Class 2 highways (Nos. 1, 2, 3); 16.17 miles of Class 3 highways; and just over 2 miles of Class 4 highway, located in the forested area of town, west of Route 100.

Figure T-1: Highway Classifications

Town Highway Classifications:

**Class #1** Town highways form the extension of a state highway route and which carry a state highway route number. \*\*

**Class #2** Town highways selected as the most important highways in each town. As far as practicable they shall be selected with the purposes of securing trunk lines of improved highways from town to town and to places which by their nature have more than normal amount of traffic. These roads are town maintained with state aid.

**Class #3** All traveled town highways other than class 1 or 2 highways. These roads are town maintained with state aid.

**Class #4** Town highways that are not class 1, 2, or 3 town highways or unidentified corridors. Some of these roads are actively maintained by the town.

**Trails** Trails are not considered highways and the town shall not be liable for their construction, maintenance, repair or safety.

\*\* Road class descriptions are from *Title 19 VSA, Chapter 3: Town Highways, Section 302: Classification of Town Highways.*

Gravel for road building and maintenance comes from private sources in Lowell and Westfield. The Town utilizes a 2005 grader and a sander, and maintains a reserve fund for repair and/or replacement of road equipment.

The Town has a schedule for regular maintenance of its roads and bridges. It has been said that Westfield has the best-maintained dirt roads in the State! At this time, all the bridges in the town have been replaced except for the one on Taft Brook on Buck Hill. This one has been placed on the list for renewal. The Town has also adopted a set of road and bridge standards prepared by the Agencies of Transportation and Natural Resources. Maintenance according these standards will ensure funding for the replacement or repair of roads, bridges, and /or culverts damaged by floodwaters. Importantly, roads, bridges, and culverts installed in accordance with these standards should help to reduce damage caused by floodwaters. An inventory and maps of bridges and culverts in the Town is maintained by the Northeastern Vermont Development Association. NVDA has also conducted a transportation study which included recommendations for improvements in Westfield's village center area. Currently a grant is being worked on to install a sidewalk along Route 100 from the Scenic View Community Care Home to the General Store. A crosswalk for pedestrian safety is also requested in the grant. This grant is being managed by NVDA.

Town businesses have access to Central Vermont and Canadian Pacific rail lines in Richford. Newport State airport in Coventry provides chartered air freight service. The nearest commercial passenger air service is available in Burlington and Montreal.

Bus and Taxi services are available out of Newport. Rural Community Transit, the region's non-profit public transit organization, provides ride services upon



request utilizing a network of volunteer drivers who are reimbursed on a per mile basis.

The western side of town has an extensive hiking trail system with some legal trails which have deeded right-of-ways. The Long Trail traverses almost the entire town from north to south from Jay State Forest to Hazen's Notch State Forest.

For motorized recreation, there are snowmobile trails throughout the town that are part of the VAST (Vermont Association Snowmobile Travelers) network. All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) usage is permitted only on Balance Rock Rd.

#### Problems/Opportunities:

- 1) As more people build homes in remote places, there may be increased demand for the Town to take up private roads or upgrade Class 4 roads.
- 2) Remote homes on poor quality roads offer limited access for fire and rescue vehicles.
- 3) At present, individuals building new driveways voluntarily consult with the Road Commissioner on construction standards and access onto town roads. This 'informal' arrangement should be reviewed for its effectiveness.
- 4) The Vermont Agency of Transportation controls access to the state highways in Westfield.
- 5) Developments at Jay Peak have led to traffic volume increases over Route 100 and other local roads.

#### Recommendations:

- 1) Consider restricting curb cuts accessing private driveways onto town roads.
- 2) Require access permit issued by Selectboard / Road Commissioner for private driveways adjoining town roads or insert some standards for driveways/private roads into general regulations section of zoning bylaw.
- 3) Continue maintaining town roads in an efficient and cost effective manner.
- 4) Consider implementing recommendations for Westfield from the NVDA transportation study.

## **ENERGY**



Electricity is supplied to Westfield by the Vermont Electric Cooperative (VEC), headquartered in Johnson, VT. VEC supplies electricity to much of northern Vermont, including all or part of 37 Northeast Kingdom towns.

System reliability tends to be very reliable with infrequent and minor outages. According to Public Service Department figures for 2005, consumer complaints for VEC averaged about 26 per 1,000 customers (highest in VT). The number of disconnects for customer non-payment were 26.1 per 1,000 customers. In 2006, the typical residential electric bill for VEC customers was \$72.11, among the highest rates in Vermont.

Westfield's town buildings are all heated with oil except for the garage, which has a combination of wood and oil. All town buildings are insulated, and energy audits have been conducted for the Town Garage, Town Clerk's Office, the Museum & Library, and the Community Center which was weatherized when it was renovated. Recommendations for energy efficiency improvements were included in the audits – along with estimated costs and payback periods – and these should be implemented. The Town Offices are relatively new with radiant heat flooring and insulated windows. The town garage has a new heating system and chimney that was installed in 2012. This was done at the recommendation of our insurance company.

The greatest share of energy consumption for both public and private users is for transportation. According to the 2000 Census, the average travel time to work for Westfield workers age 16 and older was 26 minutes. Gasoline prices and heating oil prices in the winter constantly put a strain on residents' budgets.

The Planning Commission recognizes the importance of renewable energy resources and recommends their development and use within the town. These would include the use of solar, wood, small hydro, and wind energies. Wind Energy Conversion Systems (WECS), are specifically addressed in the Westfield Zoning Bylaw to address safety and design requirements. It is the Town's goal that all WECS meet these recommendations.

Most of Westfield residents heat with gas or wood, or a combination of wood and oil. Many local homes have taken advantage of energy audits and weatherization programs offered by utilities in the past. The conservation of energy is strongly encouraged. This plan also recommends the use of efficient energy saving products such as insulation, efficient appliances, and, when necessary winter weatherization products. In addition, energy efficient behaviors such as shutting off lights when leaving the room and turning thermostats down should be taught and used at school, home and in the workplace.

Site design and construction methods can also play a role in bringing down energy costs. Orienting and designing buildings to take advantage of southern exposure allows passive solar heating in the winter months. In the same way, design and construction can afford homeowners opportunities for solar development. Consideration of the natural surroundings is also important in site design as the use of shelterbelts, or tree rows, can further reduce energy costs.

Shelterbelts act as buffers to the cold winter winds (if located on the north side of the building) or provide cooling shed in the summer (if on the south).

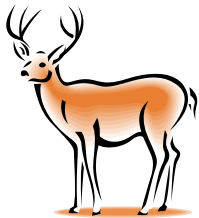
Problems/Opportunities:

- 1) Energy audits have been completed for public buildings.

Recommendations:

- 1) Check into possibility to obtain grants to finance solar energy installations for town buildings.
- 2) Consider lifetime costs including gas mileage, energy efficiency, useful life expectancy, and operating costs when purchasing new vehicles or other equipment for the Town.
- 3) Consider access to sources of renewable energy (solar, wind, and water) when reviewing zoning ordinance.
- 4) The conservation of energy and utilization of energy efficient products are recommended.
- 5) The development of small-scale renewable energy resources in the Town is encouraged.

## **WILDLIFE HABITAT and SIGNIFICANT NATURAL and HISTORIC FEATURES**



### **Wildlife Habitat**

Fisheries are indicators for clean water and diverse and productive aquatic habitat. The Missisquoi River, pending a National Scenic River designation, extends from the North Troy Dam to Westfield Village and has native populations of Brook, Rainbow, and Brown Trout. Snider and Taft Brooks have Brook Trout, and Mill Brook has native populations of both Brown and Brook Trout.

The Missisquoi flood plain is a valuable stretch of habitat for wildlife species that depend upon the water system for food, travel, and shelter. The forests and higher elevations on the west side of town provide relatively uninterrupted habitat and travel corridors for upland wildlife. While there are no deer wintering areas documented in town, it is important for large mammals like deer, moose, and bear to have these large uninterrupted areas apart from humans for travel and food. Westfield is also part of a region which supports relatively high densities of cub-producing female bears.

### **Natural Heritage Sites**

The Vermont Natural Heritage Program has identified sites including rare, threatened and endangered species, and significant natural communities in the town. Rare plants and animals tracked by the Vermont Non-game and Natural Heritage Program are native to the State and considered rare for one or more reasons: they have particular habitat requirements, are on the edge of their ranges and/or are vulnerable to disturbance or collection. Natural communities are either rare habitat types in Vermont or are among the best examples in the State of a common community type.

The Hazen's Notch area is particularly unique. The area is home to a cold calcareous cliff community; a type of community occurs in less than 10 sites statewide. The area is home to some rare plant species, and there has been a peregrine nesting site in the area. Another area of significant importance is near the confluence of the Missisquoi River and Mineral Spring Brook. This floodplain forest is the site of several rare plants. Inside Jay State Forest is a boreal outcrop on the top of Jay Peak. This high elevation forest is a home to the rare bird, the Bicknell's thrush.

A state-threatened plant species, the Great Laurel or Giant Rhododendron grow near the Westfield - Troy line. Close to the Lowell - Westfield border is a serpentine outcrop community, Brown's Ledges, where the Green Mountain Maidenhair Fern was discovered. This plant species has a global significance: there are fewer than six known sites in the world, and all are in Vermont.

### **Significant Natural & Historic Features**

The spine of the Green Mountains runs through the western side of town. Hazen's Notch State Park/Natural Area, a steep-walled gap, lies between Sugarloaf and Haystack mountains. Cliffs of serpentine rock support rare alpine plant species and has historically been a nesting place for peregrine falcons. Traversed by the Long Trail, these 197 acres provide many opportunities for recreation. The Long Trail State Forest offers 5,459 acres for fishing, hiking and hunting, follows the Trail northward to nearly connect with the Jay State Forest at the town's northern border.

The most well-known geologic feature in Westfield is Balance Rock, about a 10-minute walk off Balance Rock Road. The rock, estimated to weigh 100 tons, is perched on top of a ledge. It has been guarding the valley for over 12,000 years. The property is currently in private ownership.

The Missisquoi River meanders through the eastern side of town. It is one of five Vermont Rivers with segments of known archeological sensitivity greater than 20 miles in length. The stretch that runs through Westfield is designated as a corridor of "expected archeological sensitivity". Present and past topography, exposure, slope, distance to water, availability and abundance of food and other

natural resources combine to produce a strong likelihood that archaeological sites exist here.

Noted in the Public Lands and Buildings section of this plan, the Hitchcock Museum and Library is Westfield's most important community landmark. This historical building holds many treasures from around the world, as well as a complete history of the Town in photos, documents, and objects. The windows of this 103-year-old structure need to be repaired or replaced. The Community Center (former school) is also a historic facility and with help from grants from the Historical Society, it was renovated to resemble its original appearance. It is important for the Town to preserve and maintain these two buildings as central meeting places for Town and community functions.

#### Problems/Opportunities:

1) Westfield has many unique physical characteristics that can serve to attract many types of visitors - tourists, researchers, and recreational enthusiasts.



2) Most fragile sites in the community are protected by other physical limitations of the area - floodplain, rock outcrops, steep slopes, or inaccessibility.

3) Balance Rock is on private property and there is some concern about continued public access and landowner liability.

4) Water quality may be affected by sedimentation and runoff from logging or agricultural practices.

#### Recommendations:

1) The Natural Heritage site designations on the map should be used as red flags which indicate the need to contact biologists with the Vermont Natural Heritage Program (241-3700)

if there is development proposed with the site. The Natural Heritage Program will work directly with landowners.

2) Identify places of significant local value for the Town to consider possible acquisition of easements, right-of-ways, cooperative agreements with landowners to secure long-term access.

3) Continue regular maintenance and upkeep of the Hitchcock Library and Museum.

# LAND USE



The first settlement in Westfield occurred on Buck Hill (or West Hill) when Jesse Olds built his family's home in 1798. The flats where Westfield Village now lies weren't settled until the early 1800s. Histories of the Town suggest that this lower land was originally too wet for development. The most recent large development in is Alpine Haven in the northwest corner below Jay Peak. In 1962, the Town of Westfield deeded 200 acres to Hubert Daberer with the stipulation that he invest \$50,000 to develop the land. Daberer subsequently obtained 200 additional acres, put in a road and water system, and built a hotel and 56 chalets.

## **Current Land Use**

The Town of Westfield has 25,496 acres of land (U.S. Census). According to the 2013 Grand List, land use in the Town has not changed significantly over recent years. The total amount of farm and forestland has decreased slightly, and residential use has increased. Residential 1 and 2 parcels total 200 and are nearly equal in number. The Municipal value of these properties exceeds \$37 million. There are 11 Mobile home properties in the Town with a total Municipal value exceeding \$1.1million. Vacation (seasonal) parcels total 103 and their value is over \$15 million. There are 15 Commercial properties with a value in excess of \$4.2 million. Finally, there are 4 Utility properties in Town with a value greater than \$2.3 million.

Farms (16 parcels with a value of nearly \$6.3 million) and Woodlands (55 parcels with a value of approximately \$6.8 million) comprise much of the Town. The vast majority of the land in town remains forested. Farms include lands for crops and pasture. Thirty-seven properties are enrolled in the Use Value Appraisal (Current Use) program and this helps to ensure that they remain productive, working lands. The National Wetlands Inventory lists only 444 acres of wetlands in Westfield. This is less than 2% of the total land area.

A stated intent of the Westfield Zoning Bylaw is to provide for orderly community growth. To achieve that end, the Bylaw establishes 3 zoning districts within the town, and lists the primary objective for each district. The zoning districts are:

Village District: Exact boundaries can be viewed at the Town Offices, but the district essentially encompasses the entire village center. The primary objective for the Village District is to maintain the village's current character, while

providing for future development. The minimum lot size in this district is one-half acre.

Recreation-Residential District: This district encompasses much of the northern portion of the town. The stated objective for this district is to allow for residential development and recreational land uses while maintaining the area's rural character.

Rural-Agricultural District: All lands not included in the Village or Recreation-Residential Districts lie within the Rural-Agricultural district. The objective for this district is to provide for the continuation and expansion of agriculture.

Land Use in Westfield can also be divided into 11 discreet areas for more specific discussion of existing development patterns:

Alpine Haven is essentially an island of development separated from the rest of Westfield by topography. The character of the land is mountainous, and its proximity to Jay Peak makes it desirable for vacation home development. Existing homes are concentrated on the east side of VT Route 242 on lots of less than one acre. There has been some commercial and light industrial development on the west side of Route 242 in recent years.

Some homeowners in the Alpine Haven development are year-round residents with children who must be picked up by the school bus. The roads and water system within the development remain privately owned and maintained. There is ongoing discussion among property owners about the water rights. A wellhead protection area has been established for the Alpine Haven water system. The condominium is still in completion stages with several units rented.

North Hill's large maples form a wonderful canopy for bicyclers and walkers and contribute to the area's picturesque Vermont rural character. The presence of North Hill cemetery further adds to the peaceful environment. This part of town has experienced a transition from dairy farming to more diversified agricultural operations of over 100 acres. A recent subdivision has created some residential lots, all greater than 10 acres in size. Homes in this area are year-round. The spring and well, which serve the Village's community water system are located on North Hill, along with the aquifer protection area.

Buck Hill appeals to those who like privacy. It covers a large forested area with scattered vacation homes and hunting camps. Lots are large (greater than 10 acres in size). There are some maintained roads, but some side roads have only seasonal access, and some camps have no direct road access, running water, or electricity. There are some year-round residences including two commercial operations - a tree farm and a dairy farm which produces yogurt and a goat cheese factory. Much of the forestland in Buck Hill is in the State's Use Value Appraisal Program (Current Use), and is actively managed for forestry. The main

road provides access to some of the wood lots in the central forest section of Town. Seasonal and logging roads are used for snowmobiling.

Westfield Village remains the commercial, civic, and residential center of the Town. The main street (VT Route 100) passes by the general store, Community Center, hardware store, a computer services business, an auction house, a preschool and a commercial campground, the Hitchcock Museum and Library, and the Congregational Church. The Post Office is located in a private residence. Town offices are located in a new facility on School Street. There is some rental housing, and a community care facility. Lots in the Village range in size from less than one-half acre to several acres. The community water system is served by a spring and a well on North Hill. There is no municipal sewage disposal system.

Kennison Road is characterized by an active gravel pit and farms with smaller yet more widely dispersed fields than those on the flood plain. There are year-round residences on lots of 5+ acres, and some home-based businesses.

Loop Road, which runs along the flood plain, is lined by Westfield's prime agricultural land and its largest dairy farms. Non-farm residences are on lots of 7+ acres in size, and there is some seasonal home development on the south end. Some of the land is adjacent to the Troy talc mine, but the mine owners have established through purchase a protective buffer to minimize negative impacts to adjacent landowners.

VT Route 100, the southern approach to Westfield Village is dominated by the presence of the Benedictine Monastery with its 200+ acres of open land and retreat trails. There are also several large working farms (100+ acres in size) with prime agricultural soils. In addition, there are some home-based businesses and a commercial campground along the state highway.

VT Route 100, north of the Village has more prime agricultural land along the highway and Missisquoi River. There are 2 large farms, a commercial maple operation, and some rental housing units. These farms and the maple operation have sold their development rights, and this limits development pressure along this corridor.

The Town's extensive interior forestlands feature a prominent ridgeline, and provide a backdrop for the open fields lining the town roads and flood plain. The forestlands are very large land holdings of 1000+ acres in size. The forests provide trails for snowmobiling, hunting, and other recreational activities, as well as firewood for some local homes. Well-built logging roads could be used for future residential development. Some recent subdivisions of these lands have occurred.



Hazen's Notch, with its steep ledges and unique vegetation, is a scenic and historic area of statewide significance. The Long Trail runs through the area, and the Notch has been designated a Natural Heritage Site. The road (VT Route 58) through the Notch is closed in winter. Most of the land is owned by the State, but there is some private ownership along Route 58 toward Lowell. This private land provides access to some of the interior forests and camps.

Jay Peak, at the summit, is actually located in Westfield. This includes the Tram House and its resident apartment.

Ballground Road has experienced a considerable amount of residential development, particularly year-round homes. Typical lot sizes range from 4 to 10 acres in size. A portion of the road is maintained by the town, and the rest is privately maintained. The town is supportive of residential growth in this area.

Balance Rock Road is also experiencing housing development, but this has been primarily seasonal in nature. Recently, development has been trending toward year-round homes. Typical lot sizes are 10 acres in size. The road is maintained by the town.

### **Future Land Use**

Westfield Town officials would like to maintain the existing patterns of land use – working farms and forests surrounding an active village center with a few residential subdivisions - while providing for some new development compatible in density, type, and location:

Alpine Haven - May allow some new growth, but there are concerns about small lots, water rights and road maintenance agreements. The Town would like to see controlled growth of residential, commercial, and industrial uses on east side of VT Route 242.

North Hill - Allow additional residential development while taking steps to protect the scenic qualities of the road and rural, open character.

Buck Hill - Encourage construction of residential homes in this area. Continue to upgrade roads to accommodate residential growth. Maintain productive forest lands and preserve rural character.

Village - Maintain the village's rural character and neat, clean appearance. Encourage commercial & business opportunities in existing homes. Further growth is limited by available land, and the lack of municipal water and sewer systems.

Loop Road - Maintain agricultural land and residential use on 1+ acre lots.

South VT Route 100 - Maintain open agricultural lands. Allow some residential and small commercial development.

North VT Route 100 - Maintain rural scenic character along the roadway with open land, few residences, and farms.

Interior Forestlands - Encourage environmentally sound, sustainable forestry practices. Allow some subdivision and residential growth.

Kennison Road - Maintain existing farmlands. Allow residential growth on 1+ acres.

Balance Rock Road – The Town is supportive of continued growth in this area. The continuation of large lot development is preferred.

Ballground Road –The Town is supportive of housing growth in this area. There may come a time when the town is asked to take over portions of the road that are currently privately maintained. The road should be brought up to the minimum standards required before the town would agree to this.

#### Recommendations:

- 1) Consider the use of local and state road policies to affect the amount and type of development in each part of town.
- 2) Limit the number of curb cuts allowed on Town Roads so that landowners will have to think through their overall land plan before they begin creating lots.
- 3) Consider a provision in the zoning ordinance which will encourage orderly development by allowing greater density in a planned residential development.
- 4) In the zoning ordinance, carefully define the amount, type, and scale of commercial development to be allowed on VT Route 100 outside the Village.
- 5) Carefully consider additional development in Alpine Haven area and review permitted and conditional uses for this area in the zoning ordinance. (e.g. Amount of growth, Type, and Density)
- 6) Consider overlay zone for sensitive areas such as Wellhead Protection Areas, wetlands, Natural Heritage Sites, shorelines. Developments proposed in those areas should receive a higher level of review.

## DEVELOPMENT TRENDS and PLANS for ADJACENT TOWNS & THE REGION



The Town of Westfield is bordered by five towns. These include Montgomery, Lowell, Troy, Jay, and Richford. At the time this plan was written, the towns of Jay, Troy, Montgomery, and Richford had Town Plans in effect.

### **Montgomery:**

Westfield shares its western border with the Town of Montgomery. The two roads connecting these towns are VT Route 242, which runs through Alpine Haven and VT Route 58, also known as the Hazen's Notch Rd. The access along Route 242 has potential to bring more development into Westfield. Alpine Haven, a residential area concentrated on the border of both towns, is part of Montgomery's Village-2 District. Montgomery considers this to be one of the main centers of population in their Town. This has the potential to bring in more residential and commercial growth along Route 242 in Westfield. However, according to Montgomery's 2010 Town Plan, the population growth for Montgomery is expected to see only a small increase for the next 15 years. This implies that the potential growth pressure from Montgomery will remain quite minimal. As well, both Westfield and Montgomery delineate similar permitted and conditional uses in this area, which shows the compatibility of land use planning.

The other major road, VT Route 58 runs through Hazen's Notch Natural Heritage Area in Westfield. This route provides only limited access to Westfield. Along the highway, the area is zoned Agriculture/Residential (agriculture and single-family residential uses are permitted). It travels only a few miles through the southwest corner of Town before it dips into Lowell and is therefore a minor transportation route for Westfield. It is also closed in the winter, limiting its access even more. Besides these two routes, there is no foreseeable development along other parts of the Montgomery border because it is too mountainous (>1,600 ft.) and zoned Conservation Two. Residential uses are not permitted in this area.

### **Lowell:**

The southern border of Westfield connects to Lowell. Currently, Lowell adopted a town plan in April of 2009. Their Municipal Development Plan encouraged small business development that would not upset the settled rural character of the area. There are two major transportation routes between the two towns, as well as several town roads. As discussed earlier, Route 58 connects Montgomery Center with the village of Lowell. This has the potential to bring light residential development along the town roads of Balance Rock Road and Buck Hill Road. VT Route 100 is the major connector between Lowell, Westfield and Troy. This

State Highway creates the opportunity for increased development but there is no current pressure. This is an area to monitor for the future.

**Troy:**

The eastern border of Town is shared with Troy. Troy recently readopted their Town Plan in 2013. Their Town Plan shows that the zoning districts of Industrial, Commercial-Residential and Village Districts take up the northern half of the shared border, while the southern half is a Rural District. VT Route 100 runs through this northern border, connecting Westfield to Troy and Newport. An expansion of the municipal wastewater system for Jay/Troy has helped the ongoing development of the Jay Peak Resort. Troy is expecting future commercial development to occur that would service this resort. This could affect the development on Route 100, as well as Route 101 in Troy, parallel to the border of Westfield and Troy. This could mean more development pressure in the northeastern portion of Westfield and is worth continued monitoring.

**Jay:**

Along the northern border of Westfield is the Town of Jay. Jay's current Town Plan, adopted in December 2010, calls for land use practices which are consistent with those in Westfield. Specifically, Jay wants to preserve traditional development patterns by focusing commercial development in the village core; develop the recreational core at Jay Peak; allow low impact commercial and residential development where appropriate; and conserve open space, forestland and natural environments. However, since the Jay Plan was last adopted there have been a large number of land subdivisions in the community. This is likely due to the substantial expansion of the Jay Peak Resort. Developments and land use trends in Jay should be more closely monitored by the Planning Commission.

The two towns share VT Route 242 connecting Montgomery Center with the village of Jay. Jay Peak State Forest lies on both sides of the Westfield-Jay border, enveloping the road, thereby prohibiting much more development directly in this area. North Hill Road, a town road connecting the villages of Jay and Westfield, has the potential for increasing residential growth in the northeastern corner of Westfield.

**Richford:**

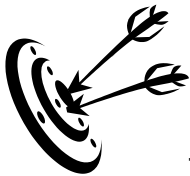
Richford touches the northwest corner of Westfield for only a few miles. These towns do not share any roads. The Jay State Forest will likely prohibit any development pressure from Richford. The official zoning map for Richford shows that the land abutting the Westfield town line is in a Conservation 2 District where development is very limited (forestry, agriculture, and public uses). The Richford Town Plan (adopted in Jan. 2013) appears to restrict development in the area bordering Westfield.

**Regional Plan:**

Westfield is nestled in the northwest corner of Orleans County, just south of the Canadian border. Westfield occupies 25,496 acres (5.7% of the county) and is more mountainous than most of Orleans County. In the regional context, Westfield is considered a Village Center. This is defined as “a small, attractive New England village which provides a pleasant environment for people who enjoy the benefit of small village living and for visitors who are attracted by the scenic and historic beauty of these villages.” These Village Centers generally have a defined central core, some public utilities such as a municipal water system, commercial development, and adequate highway access.

The Village Center category is a general pattern to guide growth in the appropriate manner which is in keeping with the character of the area. Westfield is compatible with the overall regional land use plan designed “to concentrate residential development in the growth centers while maintaining the historic character of the community; to encourage clustering of rural residential development; and to retain large blocks of open land, scenic vistas and wildlife habitat and preserve rural character”.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



The Implementation Plan is a work sheet for Westfield Town officials to use as a guide for the next five years. It lists recommendations and tasks from the plan sections and assigns a priority level for each action. As a working document, the Implementation Plan will always be in a draft form to remain flexible enough to adapt to changing needs, pressing issues, and new opportunities. Additional space is provided for further actions that become necessary after the adoption of this plan. If the Implementation Plan is maintained, it will serve as a guide for revising and updating Westfield's next Town Plan five years from now.

### GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS & PRIORITY

- ✓ Maintain good working relationship with Town of Jay concerning the shared school and developments at Jay Peak. **HIGH**
- ✓ Develop a road policy and upgrade plan which fits the amount and type of development desired in each part of town.
- ✓ Restrict the number of curb cuts allowed on town roads to ensure that large landowners consider the overall land plan before creating lots.  
**HIGH**

- ✓ Identify land of significant public value where the Town may want to secure public access through donation, acquisition, or easements.
- ✓ Monitor residential growth in order to ensure that municipal services are adequate, including the school. **HIGH**
- ✓ **MEDIUM**
- ✓ Encourage good communication between landowners and recreational users, and recognize the contribution private landowners make toward serving the town's recreation needs. **MEDIUM**
- ✓ Consider purchasing additional land for cemetery expansion. **HIGH**
- ✓ Investigate methods such as cluster development and purchase of development rights to maintain productive land while allowing some residential lot development. **MEDIUM** (through zoning)
- ✓ Contact the Orleans County Conservation District for assistance to private landowners with runoff, flooding, and erosion control issues. **LOW**

### **ZONING CHANGES**

- ✓ Review the zoning bylaw to offer a variety of option for future home sites, especially in the areas of town which are most able to support new growth. **HIGH**
- ✓ Carefully consider additional development in Alpine Haven area. This area may be subject to increased development pressure due to expansion of Jay Peak Ski Area. (How much do you want? What kind? How dense?) **HIGH**
- ✓ Clarify permitted uses and conditional use standards. **HIGH**
- ✓ Make sure lot sizes are adequate to allow for on-site water and septic systems with required isolation distances. **MEDIUM**
- ✓ Consider overlay zone for sensitive areas such as WHPAs, wetlands, Natural Heritage Sites, shorelines. **MEDIUM**
- ✓ Make sure zoning is flexible enough to allow agricultural diversification. Consider land uses such as farm stands, livestock farms, dairy processing facilities. **MEDIUM**
- ✓ Carefully determine the amount, type and scale of commercial development desired on VT Route 100 outside the Village in the zoning bylaw. **MEDIUM**
- ✓ Consider access to sources of renewable energy (sun, wind, water) when reviewing zoning bylaw. **LOW**
- ✓ Consider implementing a local animal control ordinance in the village center. **MEDIUM**
- ✓ Revise the current Zoning Bylaw to ensure consistency with 24 V.S.A., Chapter 117 – the Vermont Planning Statute.